

VZCZCXYZ0010
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHJB #0266 0951518
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 051518Z APR 07
FM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0207
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0004

UNCLAS BUJUMBURA 000266

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DEPT FOR AF/C AND IO/UNP

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [UNGA](#) [EAID](#)

SUBJECT: UN ASSISTANT-SECRETARY FOR PEACEBUILDING SUPPORT VISITS
BURUNDI

¶1. The UN Assistant-Secretary General for Peacebuilding Support, Carolyn McAskie, visited Burundi March 29-April 1 to lay the groundwork for the initial visit of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) scheduled for April 9-15. In a meeting with the diplomatic community on April 6, McAskie described the PBC's special mandate to unite all parties in the conflict to work towards reconstruction, institution-building, and sustainable development in countries emerging from conflict and to ensure continued international attention on those countries which have recently emerged from conflict. McAskie acknowledged that many potential partner countries have not yet learned how best to work to support these countries, partly because of the difficulty in assessing specific needs of post-conflict areas.

¶2. McAskie explained that the PBC intends to draw on the UN's broad capabilities and experience to ensure predictable financing for short, medium, and long term actions, propose integrated strategies for development, and develop best practices among the many political, military, humanitarian, and development actors in Burundi.

¶3. McAskie noted that the Government of Burundi (GOB) intends to treat the PBC visit to Burundi as a state visit; thus, the GOB would be in charge of the PBC's activities while in Burundi. When asked for details of the PBC program, McAskie said that the PBC would like to get out of the capital city of Bujumbura and see the "real" Burundi. The commission would also meet with a full range of interlocutors and solicit advice and cooperation from the international financial institutions that are already active in Burundi. The team expects to discuss its field visit in New York on April 17, with a goal towards finalizing the report in Bujumbura in June.

¶4. McAskie stressed that she did not want the PBC to overshadow the upcoming donor roundtable in May, but that the PBC must raise money to be an effective organization. She stressed that the PBC should not be seen as a donor forum, but as a mechanism to get more aid to Burundi. Nevertheless, she urged countries who were members of the PBC to think seriously about how to manage assistance, noting that the countries most at risk to slip into conflict were the "aid orphans" - those who are receiving little donor assistance.

¶5. In contrast, McAskie envisioned a possible role for the PBC in Burundi's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), once established. She acknowledged, however, that the PBC thus far has not participated in the ongoing debates concerning the TRC.

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